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SUBJECT: PRESIDENT'S UNGA HUMAN RIGHTS ROUNDTABLE: TIMOR-LESTE

REF: STATE 125456

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11. (U) Timor-Leste is a newly emerging democracy, independent since 2002. Its new government, freely elected in June 2007, is fully committed to safeguarding human rights and promoting democracy. It is constrained, however, by a lingering culture of political violence and low capacity on the part of its judiciary and law enforcement bodies. Most human rights violations in Timor-Leste result arise from legal impunity rather than abuses by the national police or military.

12. (U) There are no political dissidents from other countries in Timor-Leste (reftel para 3).

13. (U) The United States, as well as other international partners including Australia, Portugal, New Zealand, and Japan, extends many forms of assistance to Timor-Leste. Through USAID, the USG supports the following programs aimed at promoting democracy and human rights:

-- During the 2007 electoral cycle, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) provided technical support and training to Timor-Leste's national election authorities. The International Republican Institute provided training to political parties, and the National Democratic Institute provided voter education outreach to civil society.

-- IFES and BELUN, a local organization, are implementing the Election Violence Education and Resolution project to prevent and reduce election-related violence and tension in Timor-Leste.

-- International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) assists victims of torture and their families who suffered during the 24-year occupation by Indonesia. It has supported the construction of community memorials and non-clinical psychosocial services for more than 500 survivors. With ICMC help, partner organizations provide direct services and advocacy for the protection, rights, and welfare of survivors of torture from the pre-independence period and current, post-conflict independent state of Timor-Leste.

-- The Justice Institutions Strengthening Program, implemented by Management Sciences for Development, strengthens Timor-Leste justice institutions' capacity in financial, administrative, and management functions. In its support to the Provedor's Office, which has a constitutional mandate to promote human rights and fight corruption, the program focuses on investigation procedures and anti-corruption, public education on human rights, good governance and corruption-prevention.

--- The Asia Foundation implements the Access to Justice Program to improve standards and access to formal and informal dispute resolution for disadvantaged citizens, to improve women's access to justice, and to strengthen the legislature's role in legal reform. The program supports efforts to increase access for rural citizens to legal information and legal aid, raise awareness of village councils about their new authorities to reduce violence against women, and to improve the quality of informal dispute resolution or mediation.

¶4. (U) The USG is also supporting development of a strong free press in Timor-Leste. As part of its outreach program to the print media, the Embassy's Public Affairs section has supplied professional resource books to Timorese newspapers. With USAID support, the International Center for Journalists (ICFJ) is creating a strong, professional, and sustainable media sector in Timor-Leste. The program aims to improve the ability of Timorese journalists to produce and disseminate high quality news and expand the reach of information products available to all citizens of Timor-Leste. ICFJ's program also emphasizes the training of future Timor-Leste journalism trainers and the improvement of the enabling legal environment within which Timorese media professionals will be expected to operate once the nation's media laws and broadcast regulations have been drafted and ratified by Parliament. ICFJ will also work with its media partners in business development to enable media outlets to become financially sustainable in the long-run.

¶5. (U) This follows a two-and-a-half year USAID grant to Foundation Hirondelle to support the development of Radio and Television Timor-Leste (RTTL) as Timor-Leste's independent public broadcast service. RTTL now provides reliable news and information and is presently the most listened-to broadcaster in the country. Training was completed in journalism, program production, finance, and administration, and the workflow within RTTL studios was significantly modernized through the purchase of new equipment.

In addition, the project supported a national audience survey,

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which provides important benchmark information for RTTL managers and others in media.

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